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**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

Applicant: LeRoy A. Kuta et al. Examiner: Unknown  
Serial No.: 09/883,144 Group Art Unit: Unassigned  
Filed: June 15, 2001 Docket No.: 56731USA9A (M120.137.101)  
Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR AUTOMATICALLY APPLYING A  
FLYING SPLICING TAPE TO A ROLL OF SHEET MATERIAL

Assistant Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

Dear Sir:

Please amend the above-identified application as follows:

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend claim 18 as follows:

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1. A method of automatically applying a splicing tape to a roll of sheet material defining a width and providing an outer-most layer, the method comprising:
- lifting a portion of the outer-most layer away from a remainder of the roll;
  - cutting the lifted portion of the outer-most layer to form a leading edge of the roll that is otherwise spaced from a remainder of the roll such that the roll is defined by a wound portion and an unwound portion, the cut being made at a known spatial location relative to a circumference of the wound portion such that the leading edge is radially aligned with a defined application line on the wound portion;
  - applying the splicing tape to the wound portion of the roll at the defined application line, the splicing tape extending across at least a portion of the width of the roll; and
  - adhering the leading edge to an outer surface of the splicing tape such that the outer-most layer covers a first section of the splicing tape and a second section of the splicing tape remains exposed adjacent the leading edge.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein lifting a portion of the outer-most layer includes establishing a spacing to allow cutting of the outer-most layer.